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**Rep. Luján Supports Health Care Legislation to Cover over 32,000 Children in New Mexico**

*Legislation to Reach President's Desk This Afternoon, Will Provide Health Coverage for 11 Million Children Nationally*

Washington, DC - Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján joined a majority in the House of Representatives in support of the final version of bipartisan SCHIP legislation, which will provide health coverage for over 32,000 children in New Mexican and 11 million low-income, uninsured children nationwide. The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization Act was approved 290-135.

The legislation, H.R. 2, will help working families across the state who are struggling to provide health care coverage for their children. Last Congress, President Bush twice vetoed similar legislation. The House passage of the bill will send the bill to President Barack Obama's desk for his signature. President Obama will sign the bill this afternoon.

"Families in New Mexico are struggling during these difficult economic times, and today I proudly joined my colleagues in support of an expansion of health care coverage for low-income, uninsured children that will help children and families throughout the state," said Luján. "In a time of rising unemployment, it is especially important to make sure that parents are able to get their children the health care they need to stay healthy and active. By passing this legislation, we are investing in our children's future. Healthy children attend school, participate in after school activities, and are better equipped to put themselves on a path to success."

"I am proud that this legislation will reach the President's desk for his signature today," said Luján. "I joined my colleagues in support of an expansion of health care coverage for low-income, uninsured children that will help children and families throughout the state. Over 32,000 children in New Mexico could receive health care coverage through this legislation, which is especially critical as families in New Mexico struggle in this difficult economy."

A report released by Families USA analyzed the SCHIP legislation and detailed its positive impact on New Mexican families. According to the report, 32,100 uninsured New Mexican children could be covered under the reauthorization of SCHIP, reducing the number of uninsured children in the state by 35 percent.

The bipartisan legislation will preserve health care coverage for the 7.1 million children currently covered by SCHIP and extend coverage to 4.1 million uninsured children who are currently eligible for the program, but not enrolled. The legislation would cover almost half of the 8.7 million children uninsured nationally.

In New Mexico, 16,525 children receive health care coverage through the successful SCHIP program. This legislation will preserve coverage for these children and work toward covering the 93,000 New Mexican children who lack health insurance. According to the report, with 32,100 uninsured children who could be covered under the reauthorization of SCHIP, the number of uninsured children in New Mexico could be reduced by 35 percent. This bill increases the SCHIP allotments for New Mexico by 277%--from \$52 million to \$196.2 million.

SCHIP was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage for children in families that earn too little to afford private health insurance for their children, but too much to qualify for Medicaid.

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